

COGS 102A LAB 5: Twilight Gaze

Goal: Micro-analysis of triadic social cognition, contrasting behavioral and attributional accounts

Instructions:

You will analyze a short segment of a triadic social interaction, from the movie “*Twilight*”. This analysis will include your most micro-level description yet - where relevant changes can occur at the msec time scale. Your ethogram will include shifts in the direction and focus of gaze, eye blinks, changes in head and body orientation, facial expression, posture, inter-body distance, gesture (these characters are too ‘cool’ to do much gesturing), and vocalization (words & intonation). It is such “**semiotic resources**” that are the bases for our understanding one another’s behavior.

There is one particular segment of this clip (about 2/3 through the tape, at 1:56, involving a close-up of the Jacob character, beginning just after Bella says to Jacob, “You!”) in which he makes 15 to 20 shifts in the above behaviors in a 9 second period. For parts A) and B), you will focus in on this 9 sec segment.

In part A) you will do a **multi-scalar** analysis of Jacob’s behavior. This will include a macro-level account of this particular conversation, a micro-level account of the 9 second segment, including a detailed, change-by-change account of Jacob’s behavior (including vocalizations by him and by offscreen Bella), and a brief historic account of the regularities (“rules”) of behavior during a conversation,

In part B) you will deconstruct some mental attributions one might make about Jacob in this segment by identifying which behavioral elements lead to such attributions.

One obvious goal of this exercise is to provide an opportunity for you to see what your “shorthand” use of descriptors like “want”, “believe”, “intend”, “feel”, etc. are actually based on. That is, we are all generally well-practiced in detecting and tracking micro-level changes in the embodied activity of others, and have developed convenient terms for discussing complex configurations of them. Notice how LONG two minutes (or even 9 seconds) is when you are doing micro-analysis! Having such words gives us a way to capture whole elaborate sequences of rapid, subtle changes in semiotic resources, in simple (and sometimes misleading!) terms. Such terms can be useful in summary accounts, but become problematic when we start to see them as explanations for behavior, rather than as merely names for it (the “**Nominal Fallacy**”). In this exercise, you will NOT be allowed to use such mentalistic terms in any of your micro-level accounts! Your task is NOT to tell us what the characters are feeling or thinking “inside”, but to discover what observable aspects of their behavior lead viewers to such attributions.

A) Multi-Scalar account of Jacob-in-context

MACRO-LEVEL – This movie segment was selected because most people know these characters and something about the plot of this movie. (In case no one on your team is familiar, suffice it to say that these three characters form a “love-triangle”.) Your macro-level description should be of the particular situation these three find themselves in – the setting, the relationships between each pair and the triad as a whole, and what in general is going on. Situating the conversation in this way will also contribute to your interpretation of the characters’ behavior and thus of the distributed cognition involved. Note that this level is the ONLY one in which you are freed to use mentalistic terms – such convenient summaries of complex behavior are appropriate for this “general description of situation” account.

MICRO-LEVEL - Begin with a description of the relative positions & orientations of all 3 characters. Then list every shift in the observable semiotic resources made by Jacob in the 9 sec segment.

For **gaze**, you need to indicate every shift the orientation of Jacob's eyes and their presumed target e.g. Bella's face or body (to his left), Edward's face or body (to his right). He also looks toward less well-defined targets (e.g. "the distance"). You will also need to record his squints, blinks, and eye-flutters. For every gaze change, you must additionally code these behaviors both in terms of whether they were a move TO or FROM Bella, *and* whether they were TO or FROM Edward.

For **affect**, you need to record any change in facial expression, as well as arousal level. The latter can be observed in both pace and amplitude changes in his moves (including in the above gaze changes). You will also record any changes in body & head orientation as well as posture, again always relative to the other characters.

For **vocalization**, you need to record ALL verbal (lexical) and nonverbal sounds made by these characters. Note that you can sometimes hear a character other than Jacob - these vocalizations must also be included.

The **relative timing** of changes across the above resources is critical! Make sure that your description makes clear the precise sequence of any changes, and which resources co-occur (overlap) either wholly or partially with which others. NOTE that this will impact on HOW you should represent your micro-level data, so put some thought into how to lay out your description BEFORE you begin!

HISTORIC LEVEL – From your own extensive experience with conversations, describe some important regularities in the way that people in this culture tend to position & orient themselves, use their gaze, and time their contributions during conversation. It might be best to do this AFTER you have examined the video in some detail. These regularities are important for identifying the times when the characters comply with these conventions as well as when they violate them, both of which play into our (and presumably the interlocutors') interpretations of the conversation. Your task at this point is to spell out the relevant regularities – their implications will be dealt with elsewhere (see below).

B) Deconstructing Attributions

Reassess the same 9 second segment, but in terms of the mental attributions below. That is, for each attribution, identify the relevant moves and explain why, given how they comply with/violate some regularities of social interaction, within this particular social situation, they lead to those attributions. Be careful NOT to use mental state terms to account for these mental states!! Think instead in terms of what kinds of visual (and body) access are being attained/not, and how the affordances of such to/from changes lead you to attribute motivation and knowledge to this character.

sec2 frm31 – sec4 frm32 “Alibi” (attending elsewhere to avoid interaction)

(First move in segment: Jacob sweeps eyes from Bella to Edward;

Last move: Jacob looks Bella in the eyes)

sec5 frm15 – sec7 frm15 Resentful dodge

(First move in segment: Jacob squints)

sec7 frm15 – sec9 frm39 Self-righteous rejection

(First move in segment: Jacob starts to turn body away)

Note that above times (listed in Seconds and Frames) are approximate and may vary somewhat, depending on player!

